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STATE LIBRARY RELEASES ANNUAL REPORT OF STATISTICS
Usage of Montana's Public Libraries Remains Steady

(HELENA)---The Montana State Library released its annual statistics report today. Containing detailed information for 78 public libraries in Montana, the "*Montana Public Library Annual Report of Statistics*" provides policymakers, city/county governments, trustees, and library workers accurate information so that they may identify trends in Montana's libraries as well as make comparisons to other libraries within the state and across the country.

Statistics show that library usage in Montana has remained steady over the past 30 years. Circulation statistics (the number of items checked out from a library) reflect the following based on Census population figures at the time:

2003: 5,246,436 items were circulated, or 5.84 items per Montanan;
1993: 4,810,200 items were circulated, or 6.03 items per Montanan;
1983: 4,030,742 items were circulated, or 5.13 items per Montanan;
1973: 3,771,241 items were circulated, or 5.59 items per Montanan

Montana State Librarian Karen Strege said, "We sometimes hear people say the Internet has made libraries unnecessary. Clearly, this is not the case. Montanans have shown over the past three decades that they continue to value access to library books, journals, and programs for children and seniors."

Strege added, "What is not yet being measured in many libraries is the number of times Montanans use library resources from their homes or offices. We will continue to integrate digital offerings to our patrons, while maintaining traditional library services that are valued in our communities."

For a copy of the report, visit <http://msl.state.mt.us/> and click on "On-line Publications." Please allow a few minutes for the file to load. The report can also be obtained by visiting your local library or calling the Montana State Library at 1-800-338-5087.

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